

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claim 6 is canceled.

Claims 1, 9, and 11-12 are amended.

Support for each amended claim is found at the originally filed claims, and throughout the specification.

Upon entry of the amendment, Claims 1-5 and 7-12 will be active.

No new matter is believed to have been added.

Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claims 9 and 11-12. Claim 9 has been amended to include proper Markush language, and to alter the term “basic aqueous solution” to “basic liquid.” The “basic liquid” of Claim 9 has proper antecedent basis in Claim 1. Claim 11 has been amended to depend from Claim 10, thereby enabling proper antecedent basis for the term “basic polar organic solvent.” The term “basic aqueous solution” of Claim 12 has been amended to read “basic liquid,” which finds proper antecedent basis in Claim 7. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the amendments of Claims 9 and 11-12 obviate the rejection of these claims. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of Claims 1-12 over Neutzner. Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the limitation that the cleaning pressure of the gas, arrived at by the formula of Claim 1, is from 0.5 to 5 mbar per tray. Applicants respectfully submit this amendment makes the Claims non-obvious in light of Neutzner because the Applicants are able to achieve cleaning at per tray pressures that are significantly below those of Neutzner (300 mbar and 150 mbar per tray, respectfully, in Examples 1 and 2 of pages 19-22, as shown below):

Neutzner, in Example 1 (pages 19-20), describes 10 rainscreens in a column, which

count as 10 trays of the Applicant's invention. Neutzner further describes 4 bar of steam pressure for the same column. A pressure gradient across the column of 3 bar (4 bars down to 1 bar), which equals 3000 mbar, divided by 10 rainscreens (trays), equals 300 mbar of pressure per rainscreen (tray).

Similarly, Neutzner, in Example 2 (pages 20-22), describes a pressure of 4 bar and 20 rainscreens (trays). A pressure gradient across the column of 3 bar (4 bars down to 1 bar), which equals 3000 mbar, divided by 20 rainscreens (trays), equals 150 mbar of pressure per rainscreen (tray).

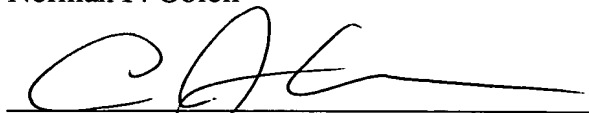
In contrast, the invention of the Applicants requires that the pressure per tray be from only 0.5 mbar to 5 mbar. Using the 0.5 mbar and 5 mbar values of the instant invention and the 300 mbar value of Neutzner in Example 1, the pressure values of the Applicant's invention represent only 0.167% to 1.67% of the pressure required by Neutzner to achieve equivalent cleaning (i.e., $(0.5 \text{ mbar} / 300 \text{ mbar}) * 100\% = 0.167\%$).

Applicants therefore submit that the pressures exemplified by Neutzner would not suggest to one of ordinary skill in the art that the cleaning could occur at 0.5 to 5mbar per tray, and that the instant invention is therefore non-obvious in view of Neutzner. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection.

Applicants submit the present application is now in condition for allowance and early notification to this effect is earnestly requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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